

BE IN THE JOY OF THE LORD

The theme of joy is one of the most important attitudes recommended by our Founder to our Congregation.

“The inspiration of our Founder calls us to live our religious life in joy and thanksgiving. We are to have a child-like trust in God, to thank him for his gifts to us and to celebrate these gifts by sharing them with our sisters and all other in openness and simplicity.”
(The Spirit of the Congregation: To know Christ Jesus. Constitutions # 4, 1984)

Joy is a fruit, a gift of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The Spirit brings joy, love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self control. These are the fruits of the spirit living in us.

In reading his letters to the sisters it is remarkable how he returns again and again to this spirit of joy and cheerfulness which he considers so vital to our religious life. I quote a few examples from his letters.

In 1834 he wrote to Sister Olympiade:

“Continue to be cheerful, the Lord wishes it. May your cheerfulness be a modest joy and of the presence of God, a simple joy that expands the heart and recreates the mind without intoxicating it and spreads a balm over all that surrounds it; which sweetens all crosses and increasing in everything the value of our work.” (Letter 6-6)

“Filled with the joy and freedom of his Spirit and rejoicing in the gift of his invitation to us, we profess and live our vows as a response in faith to the call of God.” (Constitutions # 11)

To the novice mistress Sister Marie Anne de Ponthieux he wrote

“Be in the joy of the Lord, that joy which enlarges the heart because it is pure and simple and spreads a balm on the soul that gives a kind of life to all that surrounds it and sweetens all crosses.” (Letter 03-11)

The joy that enlarges the heart, spreads comfort and solace to all our brothers and sisters in our joys and sorrows is reflected in our Constitutions

“For the mutual up-building of each other and for the enrichment of the Church we share our faith and our prayer in a spirit of simplicity and joy.”
(Constitutions #35)

In a letter to his niece, Sister Clothilde van Wymelbeke, our Founder unites courage, joy and humility with being instruments of mercy.

“Go on with courage, with joy, with humility to labor at the work of your sanctification and you will become a worthy Daughter of Mary, a true spouse of God the Savior, and an instrument of mercy for the salvation of many.” (Letter 18-6)

When our Founder speaks of joy he is not speaking of exuberance but a gentleness that flows from peace within us. The source of this joy is the simplicity and freedom that comes from belonging to Jesus Christ.

Our Constitutions summarize this

“Our community life should radiate simplicity, joy, courage, hospitality, kindness and friendship.” (Constitutions # 41)

The joy that our Founder envisions for us is based on a submission to the will of God in all things. He recommended that the Sisters “keep themselves in a gentle joy based in submission to the will of God in all things.” (Letter 19-2)

Our Constitutions echo this recommendation of our Founder:

“As Christ lived out the Father’s will, so we, following the call of our Founder, seek God’s will and submit generously and joyfully to it.” (Constitutions #3)

“Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;
Let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.
Let us greet him with thanksgiving;
Let us joyfully sing praise to him” Ps. 95:1-2

The following may help you get started.

Read, pray, reflect and share: How I experience living my religious life in joy.

Read, pray, reflect and share: Share the experiences that help me grow in simplicity, joy, courage, hospitality and kindness

Read, Pray, reflect, share



Alice Nugent, DMJ